

# LIVE DESIGN PLANTS

by Joyce Stenger

Designs having fresh plants in soilless mix are found in the schedule category for gardens, terrariums, and plant arrangements. In those designs all planting materials are used to enhance the required African violet plant. Dried materials are not allowed. No problem as there is such an array of beautiful and different types of growing plant material to choose from that brightens your design when used as a secondary focus, line or filler material.

For example: (*Columnnea microphylla*) known as the “Goldfish vine” is a lush blooming plant other than a violet. Such beautiful blossoms may need to be removed if their colorful blossoms detract from the design’s focus – your African violet. So many plants are available, it would be impossible to list all the secondary plants that can be used; here is a list of the more popular ones.



*Columnnea microphylla* (Goldfish vine)

- Shade
- Temp: 18-21°C (65-70°F)
- Keep moist, drier in winter

*Davallia canariensis* (Hare’s foot fern)

- Light shade
- Temp: 10-16°C (50-60°F)
- Moist in summer, drier in winter

**Rabbit’s foot fern (*Davallia canariensis*)** is also known as Hare’s foot fern. This plant can be used in hanging baskets or dish gardens. The grey fuzzy rhizomes of mature plants look a bit like bunnies hidden among its foliage. Ferns come in variegated, edged, and grey as well as several shades of green.



**Jubilee Ivy also known as *Hedera Golden Heart*** is a plant with small leaves that can match the gold-and-green coloring of a springtime plant arrangement or



or driftwood design. Well grown ivy can be trained to follow its wooden or wire framework so that it has an upward growth. If the foliage hangs too low, use green bendable floral wire closely woven among the vine leaves so that it has a shape most desirable.

*Hedera Golden Heart* (Jubilee ivy)

- Good light
- Temp: 4-16°C (40-60°F)

Keep moist and fed in summer

**Creeping fig (*Ficus pumila*)** is a simple plant, yet one of designers' favorite plants for terrariums. Leaves are small for a ficus-type plant and are oval in shape. The plant will climb with support. This plant is good for mixed displays such as gardens and terrariums. Cleaning individual leaves can be tedious. A quick and adequate job can be done by inverting the plant in a bucket filled with warm soapy water and giving it a good swish around. Be sure to put masking tape carefully to cover the soil mix and prevent it from spilling out.



*Ficus pumila* (Creeping fig)

- Light shade
- Temp: 16-21°C (60-70°F)

Keep moist

There are many varieties of **bamboo**. The ***Arundinaria*** is the most compact and neat. Some bamboo form groups of congested stems that completely fill a pot that they are growing in. Bamboo needs a lot of water and space while growing. The cane-like fiber can be used as line material in a



large plant arrangement.

*Arundinaria* (Bamboo)

- Good light
- Temp: 10-18°C (50-66°F)

Keep moist and fed

**Parlour palm (*Neanthe bella*)** will grow fine indoors even where there is limited space. Use it in bottle gardens. To keep the palm small apply the Bonzai method that Japan uses by pruning its roots and branches frequently. This type of procedure keeps the plant stunted so it will last for many years without growing taller than needed. When keeping the palm between uses make sure its pot is well drained, especially in terrariums.



*Neanthe bella* (Parlour palm)

- Light shade
- Temp: 16-21°C (60-70°F)

Keep moist but well drained

**Creeping moss (*Selaginella*)** can test the skills of an accomplished grower of indoor house plants. These particular plants resemble miniature moss-like ferns and available in a variety of types. Mosses are found in the flat, unadorned patches of gardens and terrariums. Keeping the moss moist enough during design competition, is a real challenge. Foliage should be frequently misted with tepid rain water. The pot should be placed on wet gravel or placed in damp peat moss. Terrariums may have a transparent top to keep in moisture, however moisture can build up and run down the inside glass. So airing the container



is a must.

Selaginella (Creeping moss)

- Shade
- Temp: 18-24°C (65-75°F)

Keep moist

Just like the African violet, all these secondary plants can really be buried in soilless mix for presentation during show time. Then remove the plants including the violet and put them back into their regular pots with wicks and onto their watering tubs. Most of these growing plants can be found at your local nurseries at different times of the year. Find a bright corner of your home for design plants to grow and be used when you are ready to create your garden, terrarium, or plant design.